

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

AID-05 COME-00 EB-07 FRB-03 TRSE-00 XMB-02 OPIC-03

CIEP-01 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 /086 W

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R 121644Z SEP 75

FM AMEMBASSY VIENNA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6642

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EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, AU

SUBJ: AUSTRIAN NATIONAL ELECTIONS -- LATEST CAMPAIGN DEVELOPMENTS

REFS: A) VIENNA 2050

B) VIENNA 5706

C) VIENNA 6652

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: JOB SECURITY AND PERFORMANCE OF  
ECONOMY CONTINUE AS DOMINANT ISSUES IN ELECTION CAMPAIGN  
WHICH ENTERING FINAL PHASE BEFORE VOTING ON  
OCTOBER 5. NEW PEOPLE'S PARTY TAUS-BUSEK TEAM ENGAGED  
IN UPHILL BATTLE AGAINST WHAT STILL SEEMS TO BE STRONGER  
BATTALIONS OF INCUMBENT SOCIALISTS (SPO), ABLY LED BY  
KREISKY. BOTH MAJOR  
PARTIES BATTERING COLLECTIVE PSYCHE OF ELECTORATE WITH  
ATLERNATING DIRE FORECASTS AND SOOTHING NOSTRUMS.  
MINOR OPPOSITION FREEDOM PARTY (FPO) TRYING TO BE HEARD  
ABOVE CLASH OF BIG TWO WITHOUT ANTAGONIZING ONE OR OTHER,  
SINCE FPO PROSPECT AS POTENTIAL COALITION PARTY AFTER  
ELECTION HAS INCREASED. AT THIS JUNCTURE, EMBASSY  
PREDICTS MINOR GAINS FOR OVP AND COMFORTABLE PLURALITY  
FOR SOCIALISTS BUT ONLY OUTSIDE CHANCES OF SPO REPEATING  
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1971 VICOTRY OF WINNING ABSOLUTE MAJORITY. SUCH

OUTCOME SUGGESTS, IN TURN, NEXT GOVERNMENT WILL MOST  
LIKELY BE SPO-FPO COALITION.  
END SUMMARY.

2. CAMPAIGN ISSUES: BREAD AND BUTTER ISSUES OF  
ECONOMY'S PERFORMANCE, JOB SECURITY AND SOCIALIST  
GOVERNMENT HANDLING OF DOWNTURN IN ECONOMY REMAIN  
DOMINANT ONES AS THREE MAJOR CONTENDING PARTIES,  
FOLLOWING SUMMER LULL, ENTER FINAL WEEKS OF  
CAMPAIGNING BEFORE OCTOBER 5 ELECTIONS. SOCIALISTS  
CONTINUE EFFECTIVELY TO PUSH THEMES ASSOCIATED WITH  
BETTER ECONOMIC SITUATION IN AUSTRIA THAN ELSE WHERE  
IN EUROPE OR IN U.S., WHICH ATTRIBUTED LARGELY TO  
COMPETENT SOCIALIST GOVERNMENT, ABLY LED BY CHANCELLOR  
KREISKY. OVP HAS REGISTERED ONLY MARGINAL SUCCESS  
IN ITS EFFORT TO COUNTER SOCIALIST CLAIMS BY CHARGING  
SOCIALISTS WITH REFUSAL TO RECOGNIZE SERIOUSNESS OF  
ECONOMIC SITUATION AND WITH MISMANAGEMENT OF ECONOMY  
AND GOVERNMENT FINANCES. FPO FAULTS BOTH MAJOR PARTIES  
FOR ALLEGED INCOMPETENCE IN HANDLING OF ECONOMY AND  
IN GOVERNING OF COUNTRY WHEN SOLELY IN POWER (OVP  
1966-1970, SOCIALISTS 1970-1975) AND CLAIMS  
SALVATION OF STATE LIES IN MAKING THIRD PARTY STRONG  
ONE.

3. CAMPAIGN TACTIC: UNDER DRIVING LEADERSHIP OF  
RECENTLY ELECTED PARTY CHAIRMAN TAUS AND DEPUTY  
SECRETARY GENERAL BUSEK, OVP HAS ENJOYED SINCE EARLY  
AUGUST UPSURGE IN PARTY'S FIGHTING SPIRIT AND IN ITS  
ELECTION PROSPECTS. RHYTHM OF OVP OFFENSIVE  
BUILDUP HOWEVER BORKEN, AT LEAST TEMPORARILY, BY  
EARLY SEPTEMBER SCANDAL INVOLVING OVP NATIONAL ASSEMBLY  
DEPUTY WHO TOOK PART IN ALLEGED ATTEMPT  
TO BRIBE JOURNALIST OF MAJOR MASS CIRCULATION  
TABLOID. SWIFT ACTION BY OVP LEADERSHIP  
IN DEALING WITH CASE SEEMS TO HAVE RESTORED ORDER IN  
RANKS OF FUNCTIONARIES BUT MAY HAVE SHAKEN DEVELOPING  
APPEAL OF TOP OVP TEAM FOR SMALL BUT CRUCIAL SWING  
VOTE. CURRENT OVP CAMPAIGN EFFORT BASED SUBSTANTIALLY  
ON SCARING ELECTORATE OVER ALLEGED FUTURE POORER  
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PROSPECTS FOR ECONOMY AND THEN REASSURING ELECTORATE  
THAT OVP, IF WINNER IN ELECTIONS, WILL PUSH FOR  
FORMATION OF GOVERNMENT OF ALL PARTIES  
TO DEAL WITH ALLEGED SERIOUS ECONOMIC PROBLEMS  
FACING AUSTRIA.

4. SPO, WHICH NOW RUNNING SLIGHTLY SCARED IN FACE OF  
OVP TAUS-BUSEK CHALLENGE, STILL SEEMS TO HAVE STRONGER

BATTALIONS; HIGHLY COMPETENT, VETERAN LEADER AND STATESMAN KREISKY AT HELM, RECORD OF SOLID ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS, AND DEDICATED CORPS OF PARTY FUNCTIONARIES. SOCIALIST CAMPAIGN TACTIC IN LAST WEEKS HAS ALSO BEEN PEGGED TO MANIPULATION OF COLLECTIVE PSYCHE: SCARE ELECTORATE THAT OVP PROGRAM REPRESENTS THREAT TO JOB SECURITY AND FUTURE SOCIAL WELFARE AND THEN REASSURE ELECTORATE THAT AUSTRIA, UNDER A THIRD KREISKY-LED SOCIALIST GOVERNMENT, WOULD CONTINUE TO PROSPER.

5. MINOR OPPOSITION FREEDOM PARTY IS BESET WITH ALL PROBLEMS OF LIMITED SIZE AND DIVERGENT - EITHER LIBERAL OR NATIONAL - POLITICAL ORIGINS OF ITS SUPPORTERS. WITH LOSS OF SOCIALIST ABSOLUTE MAJORITY NOW CONSIDERED AS MOST LIKELY OUTCOME OF ELECTIONS, FPO'S VALUE AS POTENTIAL COALITION PARTNER FOR EITHER SPO OR OVP HAS INCREASED SUBSTANTIALLY. FPO FEDERAL LEADERSHIP HAS THUS FAR AVOIDED PUBLIC COMMITMENT TO EITHER PARTY; MOST INDICATIONS HOWEVER SUGGEST FPO IS TILTING TOWARD SOCIALISTS.

6. PROBABLE ELECTION OUTCOME: CONSENSUS AT THIS JUNCTURE IS THAT SOCIALISTS, THANKS LARGELY TO KREISKY, WILL WIN COMFORTABLE PLURALITY OF SEATS BUT ARE UNLIKELY TO REPEAT 1971 FEAT OF WINNING ABSOLUTE MAJORITY. OVP CONSIDERED LIKELY TO GAIN FEW SEATS AND REMAIN SECOND STRONGEST PARTY. FPO GAINS OR LOSSES EXPECTED TO BE MINIMAL. BASED ON FOREGOING FORECAST, PROJECTED SEAT DISTRIBUTION IN NEXT PARLIAMENT WOULD BE: SPO: 88-91 (NOW 93); OVP: 83-85 (80); FPO: 9-11 (10).

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7. OTHER PARTIES CONTESTING ELECTIONS ARE COMMUNIST PARTY (KPO) AND ALL CONSTITUENCIES, GROUP OF REVOLUTIONARY MARXISTS (GRM) IN VIENNA, AND NON-PARTY TICKET OF "FRANZ STEINOCKER" IN SALZBURG. KPO IS

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ACTION EUR-12

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NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

AID-05 COME-00 EB-07 FRB-03 TRSE-00 XMB-02 OPIC-03

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GIVEN ONLY VERY SLIGHT CHANCE OF WINNING BASIC MANDATE IN VIENNA; PROSPECTS OF OTHER TWO PARTIES ARE NIL. VOTES CAST FOR KPO AND GRM PARTIES (POSSIBLY 80,000) COULD HAVE IMPORTANT IMPACT ON COMPLICATED ARITHMETIC COMPUTATIONS FOR DISTRIBUTION OF SEATS IN VERY CLOSE ELECTION, WHICH HOWEVER IS NOT CONSIDERED LIKELY AT THIS JUNCTURE.

8. BASED ON FOREGOING, BEST GUESSTIMATE OF ELECTION OUTCOME, KREISKY WILL BE UNABLE TO REESTABLISH SINGLE PARTY SOCIALIST GOVERNMENT AND WILL HAVE TO SEEK COALITION. FOR POLITICAL AND PERSONAL REASONS, KREISKY WOULD LIKELY OPT FOR SMALL COALITION WITH FPO, WHICH CONSIDERED MOST LIKELY FORM OF NEXT GOVERNMENT IN WAKE OF OCTOBER 5 ELECTIONS. AN UNEXPECTED RELATIVELY POOR SHOWING BY SPO - ONE OR TWO SEATS AHEAD OF OVP - COULD ENCOURAGE MORE LEFTIST ELEMENTS IN SOCIALIST PARTY, PARTICULARLY IN VIENNA, TO PUSH FOR COALITION WITH OVP (FPO CONSIDERED BY SOCIALIST LEFT WINGERS TO BE NAZI TAINTED). OTHER COMBINATIONS, IN WAKE OF UNLIKELY OVP PLURALITY OR UPSET OVP ABSOLUTE MAJORITY, WOULD BE OVP-SPO-FPO CONCENTRATION GOVERNMENT OR SMALL OVP-FPO COALITION.

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9. NATURE OF AUSTRIAN POLITICAL SCENE AND EXCELLENT USG RELATIONS WITH ALL THREE PARLIAMENTARY PARTIES ASSURE CONTINUED CLOSE, FRIENDLY US-AUSTRIAN RELATIONS WITH WHATEVER GOVERNMENT TAKES OFFICE AFTER

OCTOBER 5. FOREIGN POLICY IS NOT ISSUE EXCEPT THAT  
OVP LEADER TAUS HAS REPEATEDLY EMPHASIZED THAT AUSTRIAN  
NEUTRALITY RESTS ON FOUNDATION OF INTERNAL ECONOMIC  
AND POLITICAL STABILITY, WHICH HE CLAIMS COOPERATION  
AMONG PARTIES LED BY OVP WILL BETTER PROMOTE THAN  
RENEWED SOCIALIST MAJORITY. ANOTHER KREISKY-LED  
GOVERNMENT IS MOST LIKELY ELECTION OUTCOME IN  
EMBASSY'S VIEW.BUCHANAN

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** NATIONAL ELECTIONS, ELECTION CAMPAIGNS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 12 SEP 1975  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** GolinoFR  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1975VIENNA07848  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** N/A  
**Errors:** N/A  
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**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Office:** ACTION EUR  
**Original Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 5  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** 75 VIENNA 2050  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** GolinoFR  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 01 APR 2003  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <01 APR 2003 by WorrelSW>; APPROVED <02 APR 2003 by GolinoFR>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
06 JUL 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** AUSTRIAN NATIONAL ELECTIONS -- LATEST CAMPAIGN DEVELOPMENTS  
**TAGS:** PINT, PGOV, AU  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006